

Eastern MRS Meeting Notes
April 21, 2006
Lenoir Ag. Extension, Kinston

Counties Present: Beaufort, Craven, Duplin, Durham, Lenoir, Nash.

Introduction

News from Raleigh

Practice Notes Survey

Family Centered Practice

Where are we?

Where are we going?

How do we get there?

Upcoming Meetings

News from Raleigh

- Patrick Betancourt from Franklin County will be taking Tony Troop's old position starting May 3rd.
- Administrative letter regarding case summary.
- TANF/Child Welfare Collaborative Grant feds put out an RFA. Our proposal will target kids in the 13-18 range that are living with caregivers that are more than 40 years older than they are (grandparents and great grandparents.)
- Responsible Individual List will be starting May 1st. When someone is substantiated for abuse or serious neglect they will have the option to appeal. Just got it through the Rules Committee so the letter will be coming out on Monday.
 - This will start May 1, but the automation will not be complete until June 15th. If you have someone to add to the responsible individual lists paper forms will have to be mailed to the Black Mountain Office. Please pay particular attention to the Dear County Director list.
 - Also, this means that data entry people will not see the fields on the screen that are on the form. Tell them not to freak out. Just enter the rest of the form.
- In response to the request last month for more WF training. The vacant WF policy consultant position will be split between policy and training. This way we can get more training for WF.

Practice Notes Survey

- John McMann (Practice Notes) asked if folks would complete a survey regarding the practice notes. This was handed out and completed.

Family Centered Practice

How do we keep that front and center? A lot of counties say Oh yeah, we are already family centered. In reality, you were probably as family centered as the old DSS system allowed you to be, but MRS allows a much deeper level of true family centered practice.

Even if you are excited about family centered practice to begin with, when you first start to get overworked it is easier to go back to the old way that you are comfortable with because you are rushed and just need to get the work done.

On a scale from 1-10 (1 is a cop, 10 is the best you could get) where are you?

Nash

- Probably an 8 as long as they have been doing it. Still room for improvement.
- To keep it in mind it is constantly talked about in staffing, they talk about the way you talk to families and ask them for things. They still transfer cases for case management and when that transition occurs the two workers go together and review a letter with the family that discusses how they will be dealing with the family, collaterals, etc. By going over this family friendly letter each time that they have a case it lets the family know how their case will be handled, and also reminds the worker how to be family friendly.

Durham

- Probably a 6 or 7. Some vacancies have caused a rush and everyone pitching in.
- Are giving families MRS brochure. Having after hours workers initiating cases. Developed a certificate for the families when they complete case management services. On the first visit by case management they don't even do any paperwork, just talk to the family, let the family think about what they want to work on and then start with the paperwork the next time. Working on getting community partners more involved.

Craven

- About a 7 or 8.
- WF and CPS staffings are together so they each know about the families. The agency is close knit so this benefits the family. The CPS intake worker forwards a copy of all cases to the WF supervisor so she can tell if the family is already involved with WF.
- Supervisors from WF and CPS mention family centered often, and keep it in the forefront of people's minds.

Lenoir

- Probably at a 5.
- Trying to be family centered, not be incident focused and to frontload services. Trying to incorporate it in the way they talk with workers about families.

- Still working on the collaboration with Work First.

Beaufort

- About a 5 overall in the agency, still getting things in place.
- Will take first family assessment case May 1. Going to try to start keeping the case into case management.

Duplin

- Started MRS a couple of months ago and basically had to stop because of personnel issues (people having babies, leaving for other counties, etc). Trying to get back into it.

Other items of discussion:

Collaboration with WF

- Nash had a CFT with a substance abusing mom, feel like it will eventually go to court. WF worker was at the CFT. At the CFT some information came out about her drug use and her boyfriend. The woman had not been honest with the WF worker. Once this came out the WF person had no choice but to make the agency the payee for her benefits. Because the WF person told the woman this during the meeting, the meeting went downhill from there. Nash has thought about how they could have handled it differently. They want WF there, and they know the worker had to do what she did, but could it have been handled some other time than in the middle of the CFT? The CFT got so far off track that it was not beneficial anymore.

Getting started/pulling the reluctant ones along in MRS and being family centered.

- Have a couple of people try it and when they have success have them share with the others in their agency in both formal ways (presentations, staffings) and informally (in the hall, at lunch).
- Things Holly has heard from other counties
 - Lunch and Learn
 - Ah-ha moments at staffings where folks share
 - When those repeat families come in the first time after you start doing family assessment, is you can, try doing their case as a family assessment. Some people say this won't work with this family but think about it, the investigative assessments that you have been doing obviously aren't working or there wouldn't be repeat reports! Montgomery county tried this and said it was like working with a whole new family. Rowan did it and the family was so appreciative that they called the agency and even came in to do a presentation for the social workers.
- Nash when they started they jumped in 100% and were doing CFTs all over the place. Tried to get CFTs started in the assessment. Once one or

two workers did it, they were so excited about the results that they talked about it all the time, at staffings, to co-workers, and then other people started doing it. If the case then does go to case management the case plan is already almost laid out so 215 is open less time, the family is already on board, it may keep kids out of care. Many of those cases don't even come to case management (use the new finding.)

- Remember that the principles apply to interaction with agency management and staff as well as social workers and families.
- Durham has a social workers support group. If they have problems that they want to bring to the supervisors, a representative can come to the supervisors meeting, but they have to bring a proposed solution to the problem as well.
- Some newer counties concerned about the idea of talking in front of their family. Lynn from Nash said to remember that even the investigative approach you had a certain percentage of kids that would not be honest with you. This way, by talking as a family, you can set the parent up to give permission to the child to tell the truth. Ask mom to let Johnny talk to you. If she says to him Tell the truth to the social worker. If that doesn't work, ask Mom if you can talk to him alone in another room, if she gives permission that is another time she has said to the child it is ok to talk to you. You always have to remember that if you feel there is something funny you have the option to go talk to the child alone. You tell the parent that you want to work with them, but if they are resistant after repeated efforts, you tell them that bottom line this is a CPS investigation and if they (the parent) will not allow you to work with them, you will still have to complete the investigation.
- Remember that there are a lot of things that are no different. People that lied now, would have lied before.
- The experiences counties found that surprisingly, talking to them as a group works more than they would have thought at first. Just try it and see.
- Remember that this is **multiple** response. There is no one way to do all assessments. The supervisors have the hardest job because they will have to help each worker with each individual case. The old way was easier because you did the same thing all the time. Now, you have to think about what to work with each individual family.
- At some point, stop talking about it and just try it. Will always have concerns that the only way they can be alleviated is by doing it and seeing for yourself.

Where are we as a state as far as supporting our kinship placements who cannot get the same level of assistance? Financially we are punishing them for being related the children they are caring for.

- It has been the same amount for at least 20 years. There is not a lot of support in the General Assembly to increase these things.
- Diane Chavis talked about how some of the counties are supplementing this money. No matter what you do, it has to be in your Work First plan and have to have the support of the Director.
- Supplement this money under the child and family enrichment code.
- Can use WF block grant to pay for child care if is budgeted in their WF plan.
- Some counties have done vouchers for school clothes and supplies.
- Look at community agencies that donate things to foster kids and talk to them to see if they would also donate to these kids who are not technically foster kids, but are basically in the same situation.
- You should be continuing to meet with community partners around MRS (not a one time thing) so the next time you are in the community, make them aware of the issue. These are kids that would have been in foster care except that a relative stepped up and took responsibility.

Upcoming Meetings

Policy Training

5/9 Rowan Co

5/10 Edgecombe

5/16 Robeson

Monthly Meetings will be talking about System of Care

5/25 Alamance Co

5/26 Wilson Co (DSS)

6/28 Stanly Co.

6/29 Pitt Co. (Ag Center)